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ABSTRACT

The guidelines for early childhood education programs in the State of Maryland are presented. The following topics are discussed: (1) the importance of early childhood education; (2) the goals of early childhood education; (3) family and community involvement in early childhood education; (4) factors to be considered in planning an early childhood education program--the child, physical facilities, the staff, curriculum, grouping, scheduling, and evaluation; (5) procedures for initiating or modifying an early childhood education program; and (6) recommendations for the effective dissemination and use of the guidelines. Specific equipment needs and teaching and activity suggestions are provided. (KM)

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Guidelines for EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Preface

In March 1971, and again in April 1972, the State Board of Education declared early childhood education to be of high priority in Maryland. Accordingly, the Board assigned the State Department of Education to prepare by September 1972, guidelines for the development of early childhood education programs.

From the outset, it was determined that the guidelines should be developed cooperatively with representatives from many agencies and groups — State, local, and national — who are concerned with the welfare and education of young children. These include parents, health and social services agencies, colleges, and numerous other private and public agencies. Dr. James A. Sensenbaugh, in a letter inviting other agencies to select representatives to participate in the project, wrote: "We in education believe that no one agency alone has the resources to meet the multiple needs represented within programs for young children. Therefore, it becomes necessary for all agencies to work together coordinating program planning, implementation, evaluation, and resources."

During the week of June 26-June 30, 1972, a multi-agency conference was held to initiate the development of the guidelines. The conference was attended by 94 persons representing 34 agencies and groups and by 19 parents and other interested individuals. The purposes of the conference were to:

- Develop in the participants a clearer awareness of the early childhood education programs currently in operation in the State;
- Develop awareness of the issues confronting early childhood education;
- Develop some consensus regarding the scope, content, and purpose of the guidelines;
- Organize work groups and divide responsibilities among conference participants.

The guidelines were subsequently written and edited during the entire months of July and August. The names of those who contributed invaluable time, effort, and talent to the project appear in the "Acknowledgments."

The guidelines in this bulletin should provide a sound but flexible framework for designing, operating, and evaluating educational programs for young children in Maryland They indicate the critical importance of early childhood education in the total development of children; the goals of early childhood education; the factors that must be taken into consideration in planning programs; and appropriate procedures for initiating or modifying programs. While considerable latitude is given for interpreting the guidelines in light of individual community needs, this bulletin hopefully will make clear to educational planners the fundamental principles on which any early childhood education program should be based.

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Guidelines for EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

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I

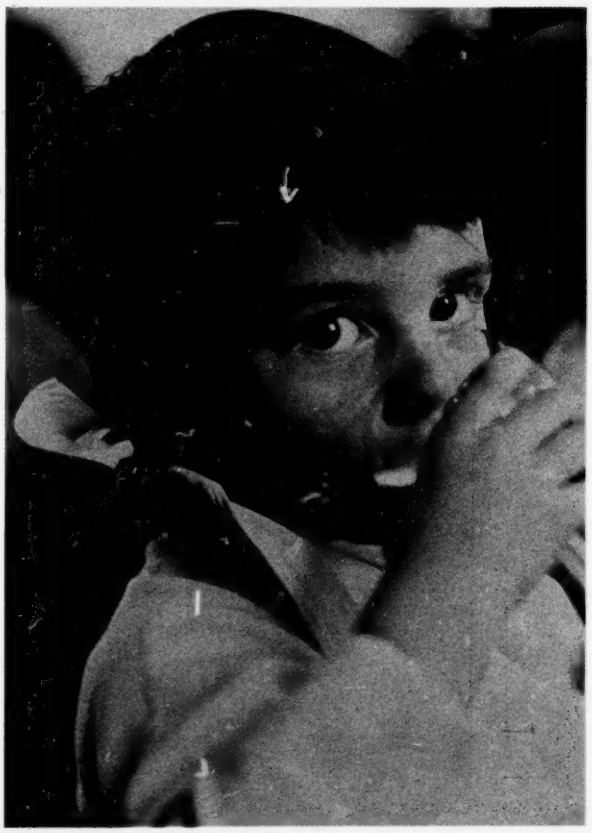
I.
The Importance of Early Childhood Education

For more than a decade, educational research has underscored the critical importance of the early years in the later development of the individual. During these years more is learned at a faster rate than at any other time. Foundations are laid for the formation of long lasting habits, attitudes, and intellectual competencies — for what virtually may become a lifetime style of living and learning. Studies by Bloom (1964), Hunt (1961), and Skeels (1966), for example, suggest that as much as 50 per cent of mature intelligence is developed by age four and 80 per cent by age eight. The studies conclude that a lack of appropriate learning opportunities during these years can result in irreversible retardation. Other researchers, such as Deutsch (1967) and Weikart (1967), have produced evidence that carefully planned educational experiences prior to age five can enable children with potential learning problems to achieve successfully in later years. These studies have profound significance for all children, and particularly for disadvantaged children, many of whom experience serious impediments to learning. Ultimately, the goal of education is for each individual to fulfill his own potential and to become a productive member of society. Early childhood education is an essential first step toward the realization of this goal.

The critical need for more comprehensive and adequate early childhood education programs in the State of Maryland is reflected in the fact that during 1971-72:

- Nearly 9,000 children in the public schools required programs of special education because of severe learning disabilities or language impairments not related to physical handicaps;
- Over 19 million dollars in federal funds were expended in the State to improve education for disadvantaged children;
- Nearly 20 per cent of Maryland's potential high school graduates for the year (based on ninth-grade projections) had left school before graduation. In school systems where there are high percentages of disadvantaged children enrolled, as many as 30-40% of the potential high school graduates drop out of school. Inadequacy of the foundation for learning developed during the early years of life is one major factor inherent in the dropout problem.

As Deutsch and Weikart indicate, well-planned learning experiences early in the lives of children can do much to prevent learning disabilities, to reduce the need for and cost of special education and remedial programs, and to strengthen the holding power of the schools. Neither Maryland nor its children can afford less than a strong program of early childhood education.



II

II.
The Goals of Early Childhood Education

An effective program of early childhood education seeks to strengthen all aspects of the child's development. Its goals are to enable the child:

- ☐ To develop a positive feeling about himself and about his own abilities to create and learn;
- ☐ To acquire a foundation for learning:
  - — To become interested in many kinds of things, in the beauty and excitement of the world about and within him;
  - — To develop the skills and processes necessary for learning and communicating about his world;
  - — To acquire information and develop concepts in a variety of content areas: language arts, science, mathematics, social studies, art, music, physical education, health and safety.
- ☐ To understand his strengths and limitations; to cope with success and failure;
- ☐ To participate in activities that increase his physical and mental health and develop positive habits of personal care;
- ☐ To meet and work with persons of different sexes, races, ages, and cultural and economic backgrounds, so as:
  - — To observe similarities and differences among people;
  - — To appreciate and learn from the unique abilities of other persons;
  - — To become sensitive to the needs and feelings of others;
  - — To cope with positive and negative feelings about other people; to cope with positive and negative feelings directed toward him;
  - — To work dependently, independently, or interdependently as the situation requires

When the goals of early childhood education are met, the child has a sense of worth and fulfillment and is responsive to the worth and needs of others. These goals will not be fully met by age three, or five, or eight. Rather, the child in his early years will begin an educational process which, if nurtured and developed throughout a lifetime, will help him to become a worthwhile and responsible human being.

III.
Family and Community Involvement in Early Childhood Education

Although the family is the basic unit of living in American life, its role has changed considerably, particularly in raising and educating children. Two factors have contributed to this change:

1. **The status of women in the family because of the percentage now employed.**
2. **The economic plight of some families in a highly industrialized and mobile society.**

In 1870, only 14 percent of the women were employed. In 1970, about 40 percent of the female population were employed. Among other things, this increase in female employment means that a mother must perform many of her traditional roles in addition to her job responsibilities. She is a wage earner and is required to be outside of her home to a greater extent than unemployed mothers. If the mother comes from a low income family, the results of her employment may be devastating. In some families she may have all the responsibility because there is no male in the household. If her education is inadequate, she may not make enough to adequately support the family.

Such conditions as these tend to minimize the home training which children receive. Essentially the need for early childhood education programs has been intensified as social and economic patterns have changed. In addition to programs for children three and four years old, there is also a need for an aspect of these programs that involves the family in a meaningful way.

Concern is often expressed that early childhood education programs do more harm than good by separating children from their parents and placing them in the school setting. Successful early childhood education programs bring children and parents closer together by improving the parents' ability to participate effectively in the development and education of their children. Good programs are developed in relation to the specific needs of the children and families to be served, place major emphasis on important roles parents can assume in the daily program, and strengthen the family through providing resources which lead to more effective parenthood.

Early childhood education programs depend in large measure upon the active involvement and support of the families and communities they serve. Without family and community assistance, the school staff can do little to identify program needs, set meaningful goals, or marshal the resources needed to finance and strengthen the program.

Involvement of parents and other community representatives in the early childhood education program can take many forms, for there are many and varying roles that each can play in contributing to program development. The following guidelines identify ways in which the school, the family, and the community can work together to achieve richer and fuller lives for young children.

- **The staff can learn from parents for parents, too, are educators.**

  Parents have helped the child to learn much of what he knows when he enters school. They want what is best for their child. They want, in effect, what the school wants. Parents make invaluable contributions to the early childhood education program when they share information with the school staff about their child: his interests; his relationship with siblings and playmates, parents and other adults; his habits of daily living.

  Parents also contribute to the total program when they participate directly in the school learning program as volunteers (assisting with health screening programs, accompanying children on trips, tutoring, serving as resource persons); as aides (helping small groups with projects under the direction of the teacher, helping to organize supplies and materials, keeping records, helping to guide organized play activities, reading stories to small groups).

- **Parents can learn and receive needed services from the school staff as they:**
  - — Observe the child in the school setting;
  - — Confer with staff members about the child's relationship to other children and adults in the school;
  - — Work wtih staff members to identify the child's needs and to acquire increased skills in developing and reinforcing positive learnings and minimizing or modifying negative learnings;
  - — Confer with specialists who can help them to identify needs and secure referral assistance for the child or the family.

  Social workers, for example, can assist families to obtain and use community resources and services relating to food, clothing, and family management needs; to cope with problems involving interpersonal family relationships; to evaluate the educational and community programs in which the child is involved and to consider alternatives in the event that a program does not seem to be appropriate for the child.

  Health specialists working with the school program—psychologists, dentists—can help parents to assess the health needs of the child and the family and secure referral assistance as needed.

- **Parents and staff members can learn from one another as they participate in conferences, workshops, and planning sessions designed to increase understandings about children or about community needs.**

  Many opportunities should be provided for parents and educators to look closely together at the community and the specific children involved in the program. Communities are not static; community needs are not constant; learning programs cannot justifiably remain unchanging. Learning about the child and the community is an essential prerequisite to program planning. Parents and staff need to understand the implication of a new industrial center, a new military base, or a changing racial or ethnic composition upon the community and the school.

- **Parents, educators, and the community must plan jointly for the initiation, modification, implementation, and evaluation of early childhood education programs.**

  Guidelines concerning this responsibility are discussed more fully in Chapter V.

- **Parents and staff members should coordinate their efforts with other community agencies and individuals in order to establish priorities affecting early childhood education.**

  Support and assistance from the community are needed, not only to establish educational goals and secure funding, but also to identify related services that need to be given high priority in community planning. These may include traffic and safety services, sanitation services, health services, social services, and other services needed to ensure the well-being of children and their families. On occasions, joint efforts will need to be expended by the school and the community to bring about needed public information programs or supportive legislation. Parents, educators, and other representatives from the community will not always agree on plans of action, and they will need to work hard to resolve their differences and arrive at acceptable compromises. But the welfare of children is at stake, and communities that care about that will find viable ways to take positive action within a climate that respects and cherishes differences.

IV

IV.
Factors to be Considered in Planning an Early Childhood Education Program

Planners of early childhood education programs must be sensitive to the total dimensions of the child's world. First, there is the child himself, the center of the learning program. Then there are the people, the places, the things, the experiences — in school and out — that surround and affect him. Each of these factors must be given careful consideration in a comprehensive and effective program for young children. Subsequent sections of this bulletin contain general principles and guidelines concerning the child, physical facilities, the staff, curriculum, grouping, scheduling, and evaluation.

A. The Child

The young child grows rapidly in many ways. His body matures physically: he grows taller and heavier; his coordination improves; his perceptions sharpen. He becomes able to relate to larger and larger groups of people. He learns to understand and deal with the many emotions that he feels. He grows ever more inquisitive: his mind questions, explores, expands.

These facets of development — physical, social, emotional, intellectual — take place concurrently, yet not at an even pace and not in isolation. The child is a complex organism. His physical development, for example, may be far ahead of or far behind his social or intellectual maturity. Yet his growth in one area affects everything he does. If the child cannot see or hear well, his ability to learn to read may be impaired, or he may be socially reticent or emotionally disturbed. If he is unhappy with himself or with someone in his home, he may find it difficult to enter into play and work activities designed to develop his mind and strengthen his body. The early childhood education program, therefore, must foster growth in all aspects of the child's development.

1. Developing the Child's Concept of Himself as a Person and as a Learner

Before his first birthday, a baby has begun to sense his worth as a human being. His concept of himself begins to form as he is held or not held; as others care for his needs or do not care for them; as he experiences voices and reactions of others; as he is handled gently or harshly. Numerous studies indicate that by the time the child is five or six, he has already formed a strongly developed picture of himself — a self-concept. That picture is with him wherever he goes; it influences everything he does. These studies also suggest that the child who feels good about himself and has confidence in his abilities is more likely to succeed than the child who believes himself incapable of success. *Success or failure, then, appears to be caused as much by the child's concept of himself as it is by measured mental ability.*

School experiences, research also indicates, can contribute to the development of an adequate and realistic self-concept in the young child when these guidelines are followed:

- **Attention to positive self-concepts should be initiated at the earliest level possible and should be consistently maintained throughout each child's school experience.**

  Each child should be made to feel that he is important, that he belongs in school, that he can do whatever needs to be done.

- **The staff must be cognizant of ways in which positive self-concepts are fostered in the young child.**

  These include:

  — Showing continuing faith in the child's ability to achieve;

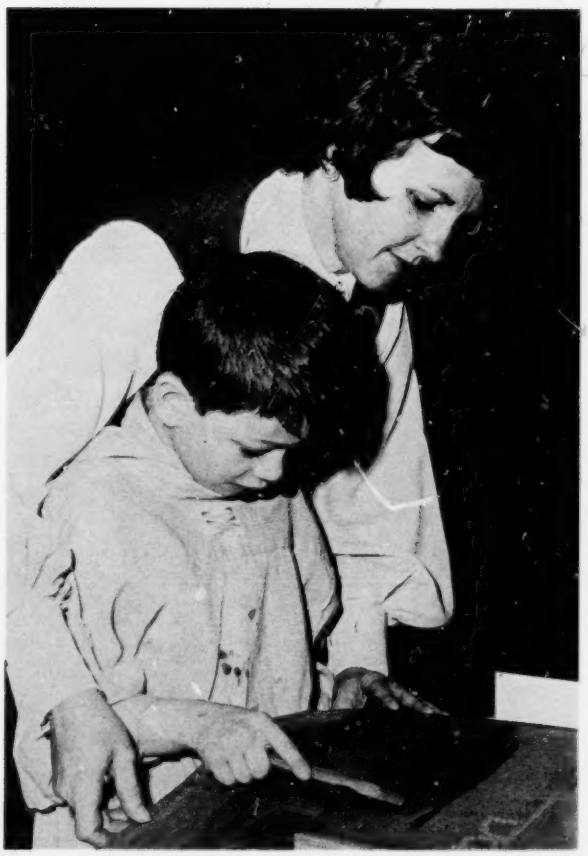
  — Using teaching methods and materials which enable the child to achieve honest success;

  — Giving attention to accomplishments, rather than mistakes;

  — Talking with the child, listening to him, and supporting him in his efforts to plan, share, solve problems, and express himself.

2. Recognizing the Child's Characteristics and Needs as the Center of the Program

Much has been written over the years about the characteristics of the young child. It is well established, for example, that he is insatiably curious; that he is egocentric; that each day he seeks greater and greater independence. It is essential for developers of early childhood education programs not only to recognize these characteristics, but more importantly, to view them as an implicit focal point for the planning of all facilities, staffing, learning experiences, grouping patterns, and schedules. While the following chart is not intended to be comprehensive, it should provide a point of view and some useful guidelines to illustrate how a given characteristic of the young child affects and determines many aspects of program planning.



Because the young child is . . .	The child needs . . .	And the staff needs to know about . . .
curious	– a time to discover his own interests	– purposeful observation of children – differentiated roles that professional, para-professional, and volunteer personnel can play in assisting children to pursue their interests
	– large blocks of time to pursue his interests	– flexible scheduling
	– a time for his questions to be heard and discussed	– problem solving procedures and techniques
	– a wide variety of materials and resources to help him find the answers to his questions	– materials, resources, and activities appropriate to children's interests and developmental levels: books, interest centers, manipulative materials, field trips, resource people
egocentric	– positive attention from others	– the relationship between self-concept and learning; ways to foster a positive self-concept
	– opportunities to care for his own needs and pursue his own interests	– techniques for helping children to establish their own limits
	– opportunities to participate and share with others: with a single partner, with small groups, with larger groups	– grouping patterns; activities appropriate to various size groups
	– a clear understanding of his special or unique role in group activities; the opportunity to assume the roles of leader and follower	– techniques for assuring the active participation of each child in group activities and for avoiding long periods of waiting in activites such as cooking or science experiments and field trips
not sure of himself	– opportunities to develop a sense of trust, to share with others, and to establish his own limits and responsibilities in group activities	– the dynamics necessary for building relationships of trust among children and between children and adults
	– praise for his successes and assistance in understanding and learning from his failures	– ways in which the individual can cope constructively with failure
experiencing feelings he doesn't fully understand	– opportunities to develop insights into his own behavior and the behavior of others – opportunities to receive recognition and to give recognition to others for their contributions	– a variety of activities through which children can come to recognize and deal with positive and negative feelings about themselves and others; e.g. role playing, reacting to hypothetical situations, dramatic play
	– freedom to express both positive and negative feelings	– the relationship between feelings and learning
	– opportunities to channel feelings into constructive behavior	– varied ways in which an individual may respond to situations involving both positive and negative feelings

Because the young child is . . .	The child needs . . .	And the staff needs to know about . . .
testing his independence	– opportunities to work alone when possible but with support when needed	– a variety of room-arrangement patterns; a variety of options for organizing the learning environment: learning centers, interest centers, media centers, outdoor centers
	– opportunities to participate in self-initiated activities as well as in those planned and initiated by the teacher or others – opportunties to be involved in group planning and decision making and in carrying out decisions	– procedures involved in decision making – questioning techniques for motivating critical thinking and verbal development – roles of leaders and group members in decision making
testing his senses and his body	– opportunities to engage in a wide variety of first-hand experiences involving seeing, hearing, tasting, touching, smelling	– materials and activities that extend learning through the use of the senses; e.g. clay, wood, weaving, cooking
	– opportunities to participate in play activities that develop large and small muscles	– materials and play activities that improve body coordination; e.g. balls, balance beam, rhythmic activities – techniques for avoiding overstimulation and understimulation
growing in a unique pattern	– opportunities to assess his own strengths and limitations	– methods, techniques, and instruments for ascertaining the developmental levels of children
	– assistance in setting realistic goals for himself in terms of his varied developmental levels	– curriculum goals appropriate to various developmental levels
	– opportunity to select from a variety of materials and activities suitable to his level in each content area	– learning experiences that are based on the child's strengths and that enable him to develop further his skills and concepts in each content area
	– assistance in evaluating his own growth and redefining his goals accordingly	– methods, techniques, and instruments for evaluating the child's growth
learning language	– something to talk about	– using stimuli that are present in the environment – providing materials which add interest and challenge to the environment – arranging for periodic change of materials and equipment in the environment
	– experiences which will promote communication	– providing experiences for children to use their senses as they interact with people, places, and things as a basis for language growth and communication skills
	– opportunities to express feelings and ideas	– creating opportunities for person-to-person conversation and group discussions

3. **Recognizing the Effect of Environment in Determining the Extent of the Child's Growth and Development**

Children grow and develop in many kinds of environments. Crowded, diversified urban areas, geographically-isolated areas, and suburban areas with their unique patterns of cultural, racial, and age-group isolation cause the development of varied life styles and give rise to different values, resources, and problems. Varied aspects of any environment have significant impact in producing particular strengths and needs in the individual. Of major importance are:

- The quality of family relationships;
- Provisions for care and protection of the individual;
- Opportunities for interaction with persons of different ages, sexes, races, and cultural backgrounds;
- Opportunities for varied experiences;
- Opportunities for intellectual stimulation and language development;
- Availability of resources to provide for needs of families and individuals.

Children who are isolated from the mainstream of society by poverty, discrimination, distance, family crises, institutionalization, or physical or mental handicaps are usually deprived of opportunities in areas identified above. Frequently, this deprivation is severe with devastating results. Children who are victims of marked deprivation require educational experiences which emphasize positive relationships, self-esteem, supportive health and social services, experiences to stimulate concept development, language development, and basic learning skills. Additional effort must be expended by the staff, by local and state boards of education and their staffs, and other officials of the community, state, and federal government to identify the needs of disadvantaged children and to provide the resources to meet those needs. For example, in urban areas where large numbers of parents may be absent from the home from early morning until late in the day due to critical necessity for employment, an extended school day, including food service, is necessary to insure maximum development of children and fulfillment of their educational needs. In rural areas where transportation to and from school consumes large blocks of time, there is a need for planning for productive use of this time through planned educational experiences that can be developed en route to school. Likewise, the isolation of children in rural areas from resources such as libraries, requires the development of traveling multi-media centers to bring books and other visual aids, educational games, and similar mental stimulation to communities otherwise deprived of these resources. Suburban children are limited in their development because of an environment that restricts opportunities to relate to many different kinds of people. Provision needs to be made for experiences which bring children into continuing relationships with a broad spectrum of people, places, and situations.

Program planning must capitalize upon those aspects of the environment which encourage growth and compensate for those which impede it. For children with marked deficits, prekindergarten opportunities must be provided to ensure maximum development and success in learning.

4. **Providing Services that Foster the Child's Physical and Emotional Well-Being***

The early years are crucial to the development of the individual's physical and emotional well-being: the child who is healthy has a better chance to learn than one who is not; the child who suffers physical or emotional disorders may experience severe learning disabilities. It is essential, therefore, that health services be directed toward the early detection and prevention of health problems.

Some specific guidelines for planning an early childhood education program that fosters physical and emotional health are as follows:

*Most of the information pertaining to health services in this chapter is extracted from the draft of Proposed Maryland School Health Manual, July 1972. Some changes have been made in the phrasing and sequence of the material. Permission to use this material has been granted by the Maryland School Health Committee. Guidelines on the food services program were developed cooperatively with the Maryland State Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Division of Nutrition.

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- **Health services should provide for thorough appraisals of each child's health needs.**

  Parents, educators, and health personnel should cooperate to assure that the child is provided with a complete medical examination before entering school, including visual acuity and hearing tests; a dental examination, preferably on an annual basis after the third year, when deciduous dentition is complete; screening for developmental, physical, or psychological disorders; and primary immunization against diptheria, tetanus, pertussis, poliomyelitits, measles (rubeola), and German measles (rubella). Some of these health appraisals may take place within the school setting; others will occur in the more specialized facilities of private family physicians and dentists, clinics, or other community health facilities. In any case, it is imperative that the results of various screening and examination procedures be coordinated and that a comprehensive and ongoing health record be maintained for each child.

  Adequate provision should be made for followup and referral services as needed and for assisting parents in selecting and using resources appropriate to the child's health needs.

- **Ongoing health appraisal should take place as the child is observed by school and health personnel on a daily or regular basis.**

  The teacher is often closer to the child than anyone else outside his immediate family and, accordingly, has unique opportunities to observe the child's functional well-being, to note incipient problems, and to assist the child in securing the help he needs. The teacher is often among the first, for example, to suspect visual or hearing defects, emotional disorders, and learning or speech problems.

  The nurse is skilled in recognizing signs of common childhood illness; the psychologist recognizes early signs of emotional disorders. Often, both have occasion to work directly with the child's family regarding health needs and can assist the teacher to know what to look for in terms of the child's health or school performance.

  Conferences between the teacher and health personnel assigned to the school or working with children on a consultant basis are invaluable in apparising the child's health needs.

- **Food services in the early childhood education program should provide the child's daily nutritional requirements and foster healthful eating habits.**

  The content and scheduling of food services should be determined by the number of hours the program operates; the facilities available for food preparation, storage, and serving; and the accepted food customs in the home and community. Snacks should be planned as supplements to meals when they are provided. A suggested food service pattern follows:

Length of Day	Minimum Meals and/or Snacks
Four hours or less	One snack
Five to seven hours	One meal and two snacks
Eight hours or more	One meal and two snacks or Two meals and one snack

  Food service facilities should provide a comfortable physical setting for children, including suitably-sized furniture; plates, cups, and utensils which can be managed by the age group; a calm, uncluttered atmosphere. Facilities should meet local health department standards in terms of sanitation and must provide for personal cleanliness on the part of children and staff.

  Eating should take place in a setting which encourages conversation, socializing, and pleasure. Foods should be attractive in appearance and arrangement; varied in color, flavor, and texture; provided in small servings with the assurance that the child can ask for more or in family style serving so that the child has some freedom to choose his own food and regulate the amount he needs and wants in a given day.

- **Learning experiences and schedules for young children should be designed to foster sound health.**

  Health services should be integrated with the learning program where possible, so that children may become more aware of the importance of health and increasingly more able to assume responsibility for their own health.

  The daily schedule of the young child should provide opportunities for him to engage in appropriate periods of rest, quiet, and vigorous activities and indoor and outdoor play.

- **An appropriate health services program should be provided for children with special needs (physical, emotional, educational disabilities), so that they may derive maximum benefits from their educational experiences.**

- **School health programs should be developed through cooperative planning and administration.**

  Parents, educators, and health personnel should work with other community agencies to identify what services are needed and available for each child. Provision should be made for coordination of services, so that optimum use may be made of community resources and so that school, health, and other professional personnel may concentrate their efforts in areas in which they are most proficient.

B. Physical Facilities

Whenever possible, prekindergarten and kindergarten centers should be housed in elementary schools. Location of centers in schools is economical and efficient, since overhead costs may be minimized and services and resources already available within the school setting may be easily extended to the younger children. Of vast importance is the opportunity afforded to the young child and his family to become involved from this initial educational experience with the school the young child will attend on a continuing basis.

Young children need indoor and outdoor space just for them; low drinking fountains; their own bathroom facilities; adequate storage areas; not too many stairs to climb; space for their needs — their pets, their noise, and their active lives. It is not always possible to house all elements of the early childhood education program in an elementary school. Therefore, when considering alternatives, it is important for planners to select facilities on the basis of availability of community services, proximity to the main school, sole use of the facility, adequacy of staff space, and the special needs of children.

The following chart underscores the necessity of planning for facilities, equipment, and supplies in light of the unique needs of children aged three to eight years. The chart is not intended to be prescriptive or exhaustive, but rather is intended to provide a framework for planning.

Guidelines for Providing Facilities for Young Children

Because the young child needs to . . .	The facilities should include . . .	The equipment should include . . .	The supplies should include . . .
Eat when hungry	Food preparation facilities	Cooking equipment, refrigerator, tables and chairs at child's height, serving dishes	Foods as required
Drink when thirsty	Child-sized drinking fountains, both indoors and outdoors	Pitchers	Cups and a variety of cool drinks
Rest when needed	Space for individual children and groups of children to rest or engage in quiet activities	Cots, couches, rocking chairs, arm chairs, rugs, boxes	Bath towels, sheets, blankets
Move about with safety while he learns	Adequate indoor and outdoor space to permit movement of groups, individuals, and equipment Space for individual, small-group, and large-group activities Safe play areas: hard surface (black top, tile) and soft surface (grass, sand)	Suggested equipment and supplies are listed in the Maryland State Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's *Regulations Governing Group Day Care Centers* 10.02.01	
Go to the bathroom	Child-sized toilets and wash basins, bathroom doors that open easily	Steps or large carrying boxes to reach adult-sized fixtures	Toilet paper, paper towels, soap
Be cared for when sick or injured	A separate room and a locking cupboard for medical supplies	A cot with covers	Quiet toys, first-aid supplies

Appropriate Roles and Needed Facilities and Equipment For Adults in the Early Childhood Program

Adult	Role	Facilities	Equipment
Principal and assistant principal	Relates effectively to children, parents, and staff members at all levels Works with parents and community to identify program goals and to plan and evaluate programs Coordinates staff planning and conferences Develops effective community and public relations	Private office that includes a conference area with chalkboard Storage space	Desk, comfortable chairs for young children and adults, tables, shelves, files, telephone, and typewriter if desired
Secretarial staff	Relates effectively to children, staff, and other persons who contact or enter the school Assists administrative and teaching staff	Office Storage space	Standard office equipment and supplies: desk, typewriter, telephone, duplicating equipment, files, etc.
Director or coordinator	Serves in a systemwide capacity to plan, implement, and evaluate the total program cooperatively with the principal, the school staff, parents, and the community Identifies and coordinates services needed to complement the educational program	Private office that includes a conference area Storage space	Desk, comfortable chair, tables, shelves, files, telephone, and typewriter if desired
Teacher	Relates effectively to children, parents, other staff members, and community Guides and leads children, paraprofessionals, volunteers, and other staff in planning, implementing, and evaluating the learning program Shares community and public relations responsibilities with the administrative staff	Planning and preparation centers Storage space	Personal desk and locker files for materials, shelves of varying height, large tables for group conferences and preparation of materials, telephone and typewriter (or access to them)
Paraprofessional	Works effectively and primarily with children Participates in team planning Carries out responsibilities that are defined cooperatively with teacher Relates effectively to staff, parents, and others involved in the program	Storage space	Personal desk and locker, files and shelves, telephone and typewriter (or access to them)
Volunteer* (parents, senior citizens, older students in the school, civic groups, college student, etc.)	Works effectively and primarily with children Participates in team planning Carries out responsibilities defined cooperatively with teacher and paraprofessionals Relates effectively to other adults involved in the program	Work room	Tables and chairs, equipment needed to perform specified responsibilities

(continued on next page)

Appropriate Roles and Needed Facilities and Equipment For Adults in the Early Childhood Program

Adult	Role	Facilities	Equipment
Nurse and other health personnel	Works with children, school staff, parents, and others to identify health needs Follows up on health needs	Storage space	Desk and comfortable chairs for young children and adults, cot, shelves and high cupboard to house supplies, telephone
Nutritional staff	Relates effectively to children, parents, and other staff members Works cooperatively with staff and families to identify nutritional needs Plans meals Orders and prepares food	Kitchen facilities, storage space	Standard kitchen equipment and supplies, telephone
Psychologist	Works with children, school staff, and parents to identify children with special needs Assists staff in developing ongoing observation and screening techniques Follows up on referrals	Conference room	Desk and comfortable chairs for young children and adults, table, testing equipment, telephone
Social Service personnel	Works with children, school staff, parents, and other community agencies to identify family and community needs Follows up on referrals	Conference room	Desk and comfortable chairs for young children and adults, table, telephone
Custodial staff	Maintains safe and healthful school facility Relates effectively to children and adults who use the facility Takes inventory and orders supplies as needed	Storage facilities	Cleaning equipment, desk and chair, telephone
Bus driver	Transports children Follows and sets an example for safety standards in traffic situations Relates effectively to children, school staff, and community	Space for loading, unloading, parking	Bus equipped with adequate safety devices for children

*In programs where only one paid staff member is available for a group of children, volunteers should be organized and committed to a routine schedule. Examples of the effectiveness of planned use of volunteers can be found in Head Start and Cooperative Nursery School Programs.

C. The Staff

People make up a very important part of the young child's learning environment, both in school and out. The child's total development — physical, emotional, social, and intellectual — is profoundly affected by his interactions with his parents, brothers and sisters, playmates, neighbors, bus drivers, teachers, paraprofessionals, and many, many others. Plans for staffing at all levels should take into account the importance of these influences.

The following understandings and guidelines are fundamental to the selection and continuing development of a staff that can work effectively with young children:

- **The staff should know about the characteristics and needs of young children and about programs and facilities appropriate for them.** (Refer to the preceding sections of this chapter.)
- **The staff should be selected in terms of the specific needs of the community and the established requirements of appropriate agencies.**

  Teachers, principals, and other professional staff members should meet the requirements of the Maryland State Department of Education; nurses, psychologists, and other health personnel should be certified by the Maryland State Department of Health and Mental Hygiene; social workers should meet the requirements of the Maryland State Department of Employment and Social Services. When possible, additional guidelines for the selection of staff members and resource persons should be developed cooperatively by parents and the professional staff. These guidelines should include provision for the career mobility of paraprofessionals.

- **The staff should include a variety of persons representing different ages, sexes, races, and cultural backgrounds.**

  The child's life is enriched when he has the opportunity to meet and work with many different kinds of persons.

- **Every staff member involved with the child, whether on a daily basis or periodically, in the classroom or outside it, must understand that he is a potential model for positive or negative behavior.**

  The young child learns by imitating. He becomes curious or eager when he is motivated by others who are questioning, enthusiastic, and knowledgeable. He becomes accepting and friendly when he is with others who are warm, receptive, and understanding. He learns honesty from honest people, dishonesty from dishonest people. And from others he learns to laugh or to inflict pain.

- **The professional staff should recognize the inevitable existence of positive and negative influences in the child's life and should know how to deal with those influences in the learning situation.**

  The staff and the parents should work closely together to identify and reinforce positive influences in the child's environment, find ways to minimize negative influences, and help the child to recognize and cope with the presence of negative influences.

- **Each staff member should understand clearly his role in the total program.**
- **Each staff member should be provided with the facilities and equipment necessary to carry out his responsibilities.**

  The number of persons involved in the early childhood education program will depend upon the needs and resources of each community. The following chart is not intended to designate required staff positions. Rather, it suggests appropriate roles, facilities, and equipment when such personnel are available in terms of program design and budget.

- **The early childhood education program should provide for continuing staff development**

  Staff training should begin prior to each member's initial involvement in the program and should continue throughout his association with it. Productive and lasting staff training cannot result from a one-time exposure or from a hurried or superficial experience. The blocks of time needed for staff development should be determined by each individual staff. On occasion, released time or out-of-school time may be desirable to permit a thorough development of a particular area of concern. At other times, staff training will take place concomitantly with other activities as staff members identify the needs of children and the community, identify program goals, and plan, implement, and evaluate the educational program.

  A variety of materials and activities should be available to the staff as it engages in individual and total staff development. Observations, video tapes, tape recordings, films, field trips, seminars, and workshops can be extremely useful in facilitating the development of staff competencies. Resource persons at the local and State level should be involved as needed to answer questions, assist with planning, demonstrate procedures and methods, and assist in the selection or construction of materials.

  Staff training programs will be most effective when adequate leadership is available. Intervisitation, cooperative planning, and interconsultation among personnel from various local units and counties can enable each staff to develop leadership skills, capitalize upon existing programs, and reduce duplication of effort.

D. Curriculum

The curriculum of the early childhood education program should be:

- — Broad in scope to provide for the varied and expanding needs of children;
- — Flexible, based not upon "set" patterns of learning, but upon the learnings required by each child.

General guidelines for planning a comprehensive and flexible curriculum for young children are as follows:

- **Curriculum planning should be predicted upon certain basic understandings about the way children learn:**
  - — Learning is continuous; it proceeds from the know to the unknown.

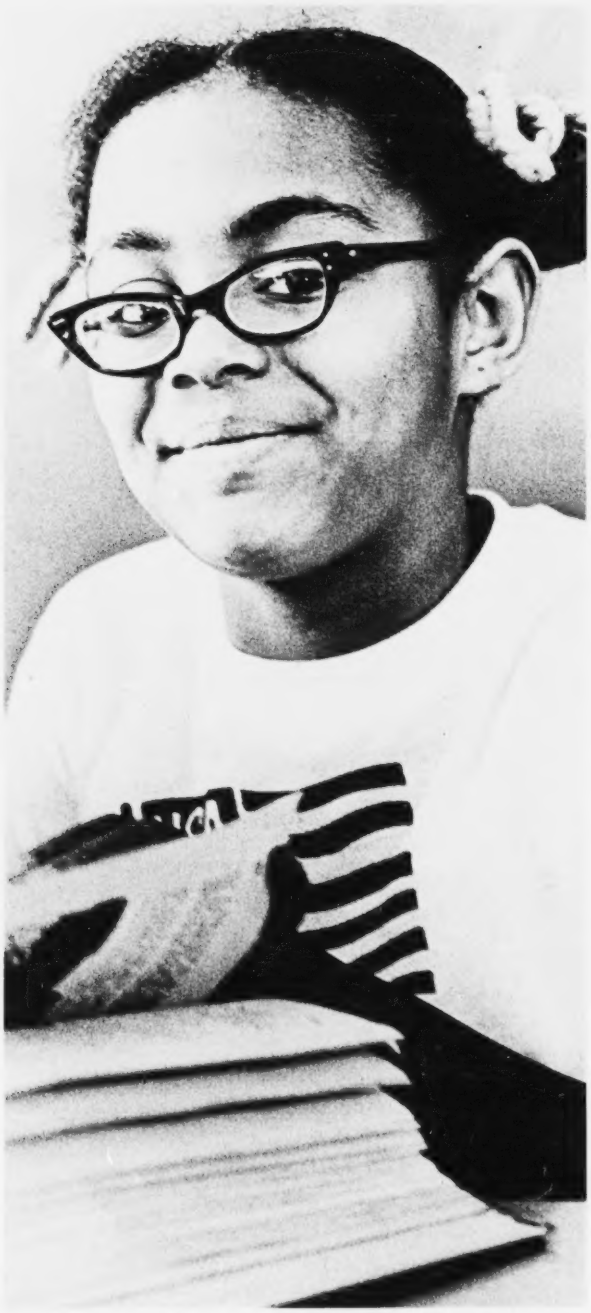
  The child brings to the early childhood education program many skills and understandings that need to be extended, refined, or modified.
  - — Learning results from reinforcement of experience over a span of time.
  - — Learning takes place best when what is to be learned is appropriate to the developmental levels of the learner.
  - — Learning is a multifaceted process.

  The following chart illustrates some of the aspects of learning that can be developed as the young child engages in even a very simple activity.

- **Curriculum planning for the total early childhood education program includes the following:**
  - — Establishing the broad goals of the learning program;
  - — Identifying the content, concepts, skills, processes, developmental tasks, and attitudes needed to help younger children function effectively in their daily lives and build a sound basis for future learning;
  - — Developing a wide variety of learning experiences appropriate to the many developmental levels of children;
  - —Selecting materials and resources which will help children to accomplish program goals.

- **Planning a learning program for a particular child requires the following:**
  - — Ascertaining the child's needs and developmental levels;
  - — Planning a program appropriate to those needs and levels; leading the child from where he is in his physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development towards what he can become.

  In essence, each child should engage in a learning program that is harmonious with the broad purposes of the total program for young children, but at the same time is uniquely suitable for him. Research has shown that nearly every child, including the exceptional child, can benefit immensely from early childhood education, so long as the program is appropriate and meaningful for him. The program for the exceptional child may require, beyond the provision for all children, a variety of alternatives or related services, such as services to parents to assist them to work with their exceptional child, or combined school and home experiences for the child.



■ **Planning a specific learning experience for one child or a group of children requires the following:**

— Identifying the aspects of learning potential in the experience: what content areas, concepts, skills, processes, developmental tasks, attitudes may be involved.

Content areas may be described as the raw material of learning. "Content" is the body of knowledge that exists in particular fields of human study and endeavor: language arts, science, mathematics, social studies, art, music, physical education, health and safety.

Young children derive information through firsthand experiences and through media such as television. Some of this information they can understand and use. Some of it they completely misunderstand. It is not unusual, for example, for a young child to give an impression of understanding as he talks about things, yet reveal no real understanding in a direct learning experience in which that information plays a part.

Learning experiences should provide children with an opportunity to modify and acquire understandings in the various content areas. Accordingly, children need opportunities to develop certain skills, processes, concepts, and attitudes that are peculiar, if not always unique, to each discipline or content area.

The following curriculum materials, available through the Maryland State Department of Education, Division of Instruction, contain useful guidelines for determining the scope of various content areas in the early childhood education program:

"New Perspectives in Intergroup Education"
"Reading — Goals and Characteristics"
"Environment and Education"
"Health Education Curriculum"
"Please Listen To Me"
"Prescription for Special Education"

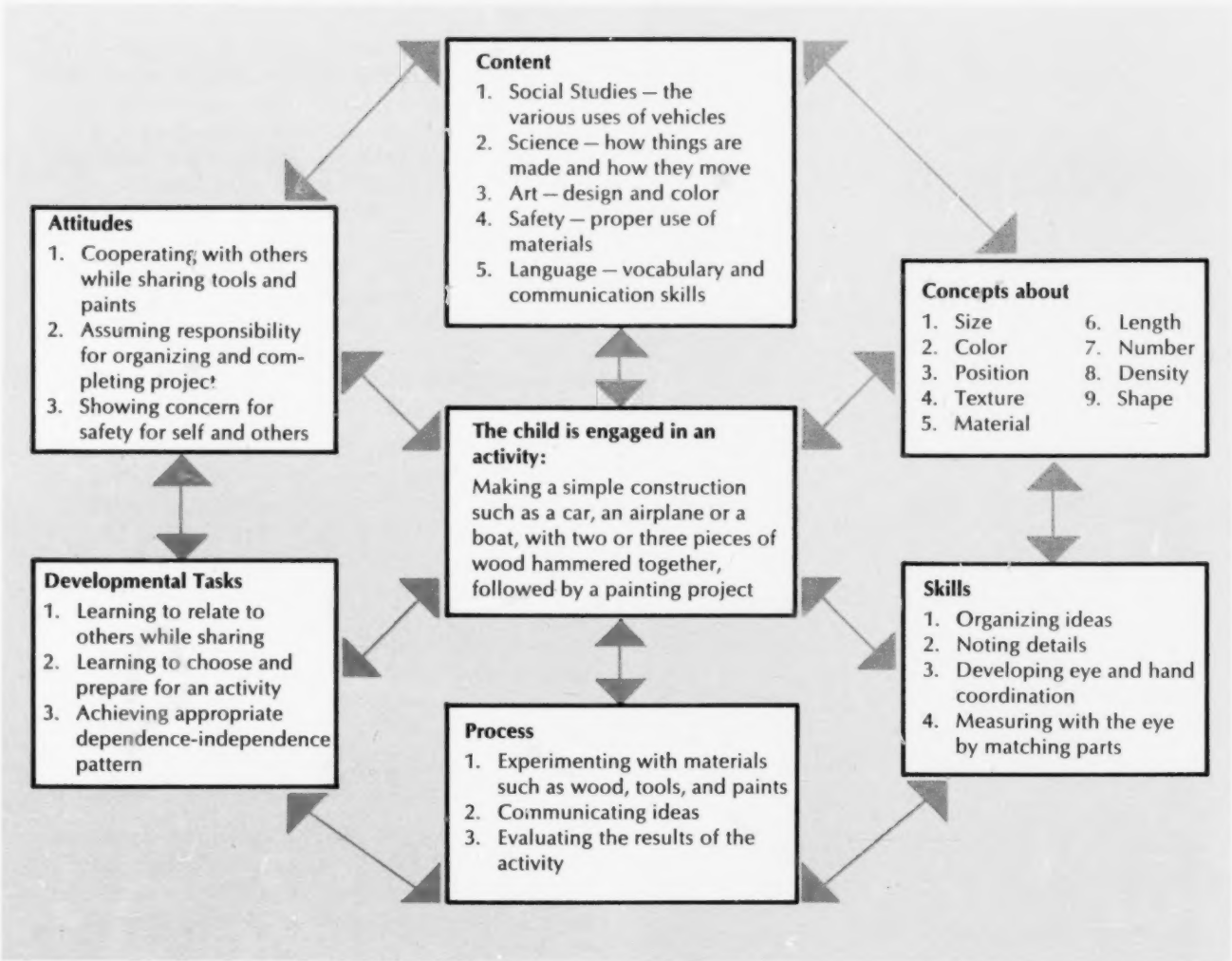
— determining which aspects of learning are to receive particular attention for the child.

The learning program for one child may call for reinforcement of particular attitudes in a certain type of activity, for example, while another child engaged in a similar activity may be concentrating primarily on the development of a particular skill. It is important for the learning experience to focus upon those learnings which are most needed by each child at a given stage in his development.

- **Learning experiences which focus on a particular aspect of learning should be predicated on a clear understanding of how those aspects are developed.**

The following pages suggest ways of developing learning experiences that focus primarily on concepts, skills and processes, developmental tasks, or attitudes.

Aspects of Learning Potential In A Given Activity


Content
1. Social Studies – the various uses of vehicles
2. Science – how things are made and how they move
3. Art – design and color
4. Safety – proper use of materials
5. Language – vocabulary and communication skills
Attitudes
1. Cooperating with others while sharing tools and paints
2. Assuming responsibility for organizing and completing project
3. Showing concern for safety for self and others
Concepts about
1. Size
2. Color
3. Position
4. Texture
5. Material
6. Length
7. Number
8. Density
9. Shape
The child is engaged in an activity:
Making a simple construction such as a car, an airplane or a boat, with two or three pieces of wood hammered together, followed by a painting project
Developmental Tasks
1. Learning to relate to others while sharing
2. Learning to choose and prepare for an activity
3. Achieving appropriate dependence-independence pattern
Skills
1. Organizing ideas
2. Noting details
3. Developing eye and hand coordination
4. Measuring with the eye by matching parts
Process
1. Experimenting with materials such as wood, tools, and paints
2. Communicating ideas
3. Evaluating the results of the activity

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Concepts

Concepts begin to develop as children become able to generalize ideas from particular situations. When a child is very young, many of these concepts concern himself — his relationship to objects and persons in his environment. The child soon observes, for example, that he is "bigger" or "smaller" than another child, or "taller" or "shorter." These labels are based upon some understanding of concepts involving size, weight, and height. Gradually, the child begins to relate these simple concepts to other persons and objects in his experience and to form broader and broader conceptual understandings, such as concepts about space, time, texture, density, speed, color, number, and order.

The two examples that follow illustrate some of the kinds of activities appropriate for focusing on concept development. In the first, a variety of suggestions are made for helping children at different levels develop concepts about themselves and their relationship to the physical world. In the second, an illustration is given of how a series of activities over an extended period of time can develop more sophisticated concepts as the child attains knowledge and skills and as prior learnings are reinforced and extended.

Example 1: Developing Concepts of Self in Relation to Space

During the preschool years, repeated experiences in moving about the environment provide the child with initial understandings concerning his own orientation in space and the relationship between himself and other things in space.

Planned learning experiences which can extend the child's initial concepts about himself in space will vary with the needs and developmental levels of each child. Some children will need help initially in:

— Understanding the space required by one's body in different situations: space required when arms are stretched out, when stooping, when sitting, when lying down;

— Understanding the space required by one's body to move in a variety of ways: walking, running, jumping, skipping, hopping, sliding;
— Understanding the relative amount of space one requires in a given situation as compared to other persons or objects;
— Understanding the position of oneself in relation to other persons or objects: near, far, in front of, behind, next to, over, under, between, among, inside, outside.

Other children with wider experience will develop more definitive concepts and vocabularies about their orientation in space: they will be able to express distances such as "nearer" or "farther" in terms that are more precise: "a foot" or "four blocks away." They will be able to determine direction not only in terms of "up" and "down," "in" and "out," but also "right" and "left," "north" and "south." These concepts are developed as children engage in activities in which they learn a variety of ways to determine distances and directions: pacing the distance to the window or the playground; measuring the distance; finding the third mailbox on the right; constructing a map showing the route from home to school; using a compass.

In addition to planned experiences which focus primarily on concepts about the child's orientation in space, numerous other opportunities will arise for reinforcement as the child engages in play or work. As the very young child climbs the steps to the sliding board, for example, he may be encouraged to observe that he is going "up" or "down," or that the distance down the sliding board is "about six feet." The teacher will need to determine the optimum timing and frequency of these reinforcements.

Example 2: Developing Concepts about Water
The following chart illustrates how concepts may be developed at different levels and with groups of different sizes and ages over an extended period of time. (The specific activity involved in this kind of planning will vary with changing content emphases and with ages and abilities of children.)

Developing Concepts About Water

Some Concepts That Can Be Developed	Water Activity	Group Size and Composition
Water takes up space. Water has weight. (The empty container is lighter than the filled container.)	Filling and emptying plastic containers	One to three younger children and an adult
Water can change form: — It can become a solid. — It can become a gas. — It can evaporate. Water is affected by changes in temperature.	Observing the effects of temperature change on water (series of spaced activities at different seasons and involving recall)	One to three younger children and an adult (teacher or resource person) or a larger group of older children (age six to eight) and an adult
Water exerts force. Water can be a constructive or destructive source of energy. Water can change landforms. Flooding can be controlled.	Locating and using books and other sources of information about the causes and effects of flooding (pictures for younger children, reading materials for those who can read)	One older child (age seven to eight) in an independent study project, or a small group of children and one or more adults (teacher, resource person)

Skills and Processes

As children grow, they learn to master certain skills and to undertake a series of interrelated skills or operations in order to achieve a particular goal. In a sense, processes are to skills what complex concepts are to simpler ones. The very young child, for example, may be able to place his foot into a shoe of appropriate size (a coordination skill), but if he cannot find a matching pair of shoes or tie the laces, he cannot really complete the "process" of "putting on his shoes."

Children in the early childhood education program need many opportunities to engage in skill development and reinforcement and to direct those skills toward the accomplishment of a specific end. Skills are developed largely through practice. Just as the child learns to speak by imitating and practicing sounds, so must he practice lettering or handwriting or buttoning or pouring or reading if he is to master those skills.

Children also need opportunities to develop processes such as exploring, experimenting, communicating, measuring, interacting, analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating. They need to discover which processes are more or less efficient in accomplishing goals. For example, they need to learn, perhaps by trial and error, that it is sometimes more efficient when measuring to use a funnel to pour water into a narrow-necked container than to pour it directly from a pitcher. The child's competence in performing processes, then, grows as he becomes more and more discriminating in the selection and application of skills to achieve his purposes.

Here are two examples of learning experiences in which the child has an opportunity to develop both skills and processes:

Example 1: Measuring

There are many occasions in which the child will need to complete the process of measuring in order to carry out a project or experiment. The following is an example of one such occasion.

Process to be completed — Measuring ½ cup of water to be used in a cooking or science experiment

Skills Involved:

Coordination skills:

- Turning faucet on and off, regulating force of the water (This skill may need to be practiced many times before the young child really achieves competence.)
- Pouring from one receptacle into another (Again, much practice may be needed before the child can pour with control, without spilling.)

Perceptual skills:

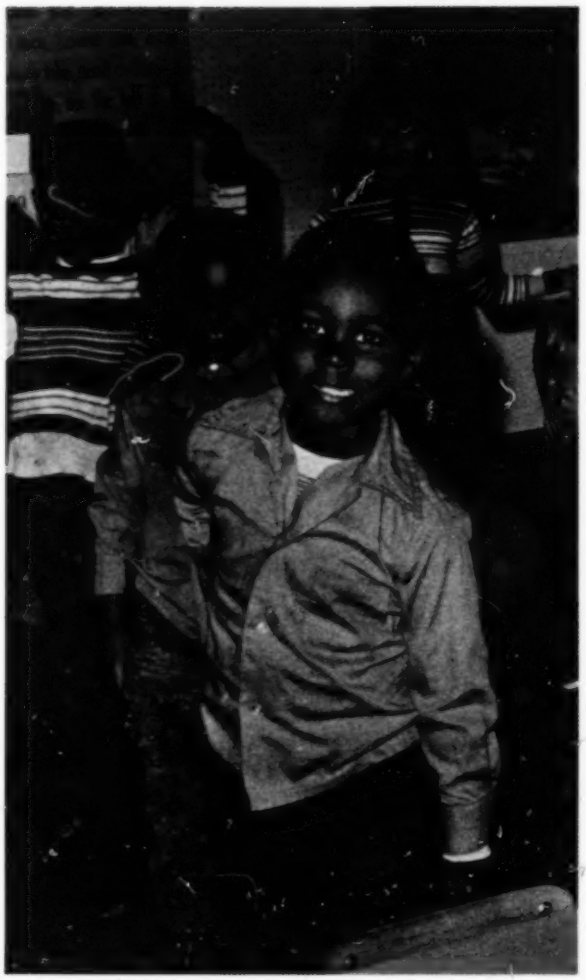
- Locating the half-way mark on the cup;
- Recognizing when the water level coincides with the half-way demarcation on the cup.

Example 2: Communicating

Process to be completed — Communicating to another child or adult an idea for constructing an object

Skills Involved:

- Using gestures and language to convey thoughts;
- Noting details;
- Organizing ideas; e.g. telling the other persons what will be done first, next, last;
- Inferring from verbal or facial clues and signals whether or not the ideas is being understood;
- Perhaps using other skills to clarify what is not being understood; e.g. drawing a picture or model.



Developmental Tasks

Each individual in a given society is expected to develop certain behaviors in relation to standards established by that society and its subcultures. Some of these behaviors, or developmental tasks, are achieved chiefly during the early years of life (e.g. controlling bodily movements and processes); some begin to be achieved early but continue to develop at more advanced levels during later years (e.g. relating to changing social groups, adjusting to a changing body, achieving appropriate patterns of dependence – interdependence – independence, mastering and using an accepted symbol system).

Early childhood education is concerned with developmental tasks, since the school environment, together with the home and community environment, can either contribute to or impede their achievement. Two examples of planning learning experiences that focus on developmental tasks follow:

Example 1: Helping Children to Relate to Changing Social Groups

The young child is self-centered, concerned with his own wants and needs. He is just beginning to develop an awareness of others. To assist the child in learning to relate to others, it is important that the program provide:

- Interest areas that invite group activity, such as construction centers, experimentation centers, housekeeping areas, learning stations where children may begin to work together in relation to common interests and purposes;
- Equipment that requires or encourages cooperative endeavors such as large hollow blocks, climbing apparatus, audiovisual equipment;
- Activities that require small and large groups to achieve specific goals such as games, discussions, role playing, and dramatizations;
- Opportunities to assume the role of leader or follower in a variety of situations;
- Guidance in developing limits to be applied to group activities requiring sharing of space, materials, and equipment; e.g. using a timer to equalize time blocks for activities and encouraging children to "take turns."

These experiences should be planned in relation to the developmental levels of children and with the flexibility to meet individual needs. Each child will require his own pattern and balance of individual and group activities.

Example 2: Helping Children to Achieve Dependence — Interdependence — Independence

Initially, the child is totally dependent upon others, but by ages three and four, he displays increasing independence as he begins to care for personal needs such as eating without help or mastering some phases of dressing himself.

An early childhood education program can contribute to increased independence by:

- Providing furniture, equipment, and materials that the child can handle and manipulate with comfort, safety, and ease;
- Involving the child in making decisions concerning storage of personal belongings and work materials, changes in daily scheduling, plans for special or unusual events or changes in plans;
- Labeling storage areas, interest areas or learning stations so the child may become more self-directed. At the earliest levels, labels may consist of an appropriate concrete object or a picture; later, a picture and a corresponding word; still later, a word, a phrase, or a sentence can serve to identify important areas.

Continuing dependency needs can be provided for by means of:

- Availability of adults for questions, conferences, or special problems. Paraprofessionals and/or volunteers can support the teacher in these roles;
- Self-help devices for checking the outcome of games, practice activities, or learning stations;
- Availability of materials representing varied levels of difficulty so that children have alternatives for meeting needs and building upon success.

Interdependence can be enhanced as a result of activities such as cooking, gardening, or constructing. The success of these activities is dependent upon the efforts of many different persons.

Attitudes

During the early years, children form many basic attitudes toward themselves and others and toward their experiences. Early childhood education programs can provide many opportunities for children to develop positive attitudes, such as cooperation, appreciation, acceptance, respect, sensitivity, responsibility, and the desire to learn.

Activities which are particularly useful in developing positive attitudes with young children include:

- Dramatic play: house, gas station, store, farm center, police station, fire station
- Role playing: becoming a participant in imaginary encounters and interactions
- Group projects: making a mural, singing together, building a structure
- Respect for different roles and kinds of work
- Sensitivity to the feelings of others, to the effects of gestures and words
- Appreciation of the talents of self and others
- Cooperation in sharing materials
- Responsibility in carrying out individual tasks

Language

Our society places great importance upon one's ability in verbal expression. The ability to communicate effectively plays a major role in determining the success of the individual. As early as third grade, the extent of a child's vocabulary may be a crucial factor in determining success in school.

The language habits which the young child acquires and the ways in which he uses language in his daily life shape his intellectual development, especially the development of the ability for abstraction and conceptual learning.

The teaching staff faces the daily challenge of motivating the young child to use language as a tool not only for communicating, but also for thinking. (problem solving, labeling, forming concepts, comparing, relating causes and effects, etc.)

To further the development of language for young children the staff should:

- Provide objects for children to handle, examine, describe, compare, differentiate, and use;
- Involve children in a wide variety of experiences which provide information and which produce needs for communication;
- Provide opportunities for attentive listening on a one-to-one basis and within group situations;
- Use complete sentences when addressing and responding to children. The teacher is the child's model, and his use of language will influence the child's language ability;
- Classify whenever possible when addressing the child in order to build concepts. (i.e. "That *animal* is a gerbil" or "This *color* is blue.");
- Use specific descriptive words frequently to foster vocabulary development and word comprehension. Naming characteristics about items give the child more information so that he can distinguish differences and similarities;
- Use materials which require "matching" or classifying objects in relation to common characteristics (color, size, shape, etc.). Provide opportunities to name qualities of sameness and qualities of difference;
- Make accurate references to height, weight, size or other characteristics of dimension. Ambiguity fosters confusion;
- Describe children's motor activity (i.e. "John climbs the ladder.") Gradually introduce different tenses;
- Develop a technique of repeating the child's expression for him in standard English when appropriate.

Language development is most critical among disadvantaged children and must be developed consistently as a major part of each activity.

E. Grouping

School organizational patterns will vary with the special needs of each community. Patterns that are effective for children in a rural setting, for example, may or may not succeed in an urban or suburban setting. Similarly, within an individual school what is best for one child may or may not be appropriate for another. Grouping for the total school and for the individual child is most effective when it is based on these guidelines:

- **Grouping patterns should provide opportunities for children to work with and learn from other children of different sexes, races, chronological ages, and cultural backgrounds.**
- **Young children should be grouped by developmental level, rather than by chronological age or grade.**

"Grade" suggests that there is a preconceived set of information and skills that can be completed in one year. Research indicates that this kind of arbitrary grouping not only has been unsuccessful for many children, but has been actually harmful to their development. Unfortunately, the results of this research have not been disseminated widely and many parents continue to look to "grade level" information and "promotion" from grade to grade to tell them whether their children are learning or not learning.

■ **Life situations demand that people be able to cooperate and work productively with groups of various sizes. Children should be provided opportunities to develop abilities and skills necessary for operating effectively both individually and as a member of a group.**

Group size and staffing must be determined in relation to the ages, needs, and abilities of children, the nature and purpose of particular programs and educational activities, and the size and use of classroom space. It is difficult, therefore, to define specific group size. To insure maximum opportunity for child-adult interaction, the following number of pupils per adult is recommended:

Three-year-olds	Five children to one adult
Four-year-olds	Seven children to one adult
Five-year-olds	Ten children to one adult
Six-, seven-, and eight-year-olds	Twelve to fourteen children to one adult

For example, in a class of 35 seven- and eight-year-olds, the staff would consist of one teacher, one paraprofessional and one volunteer, or one teacher and two volunteers.

When children of mixed ages are grouped together, the size of the group should be determined by the age of the children and their special needs.

The adults involved with young children on a regular basis should always include a teacher and, if possible, a paraprofessional.

In situations where the budget does not permit more than one paid staff member, volunteers should be recruited, trained, and scheduled on a regular basis. (Refer to chart on staffing.) Volunteers as members of the staff play a vital and necessary role in all programs where additional help is needed. Young children require a great deal of one-to-one contact, which must be considered when establishing group size and determining the number of staff members needed. There must be sufficient staff, both paid and volunteer, to make individualized instruction possible.

■ **Open-space facilities lend themselves to flexible and multi-age grouping, but careful planning is needed for optimum use of such facilities.**

Evidence indicates that in too many so-called open-space schools large groups of children are consistently doing the same activity at the same time, using identical materials. In such instances, it is imperative for educational planners to take a careful look at the program to identify practices which are getting in the way of recognizing children as individuals and providing for their needs.

In communities in which open-space facilities are being initiated, a transition period is needed for children, staff members, and parents to become accustomed to the increased freedom of movement and noise that accompany flexible grouping and individualized instruction. In these communities, it is suggested that flexible grouping patterns initially prevail for only part of the school day, and that gradually they expand to include the whole day.

■ **Tests should not be used as the sole factor for grouping young children for any school experience.**

Conferences with parents and observations of children's interests and behavior are invaluable indices for determining grouping patterns. As the child develops in the program, tests can be useful, along with other evaluative instruments, in ascertaining appropriate groups for certain kinds of activities. (See Section entitled "Evaluation" in this chapter.)

■ **Children should move in and out of groups as their interests and needs indicate.**

Children's interests vary, and they develop at different rates. Some need more or less time than others to complete given tasks. They should not be "locked" into set and unchanging groups.

F. Scheduling

In its broadest sense, scheduling involves determining such policies as:

- When the school day should begin and end;
- How long the school year should last;
- Whether a particular child should attend all day or part of the day, morning or afternoon, every day or alternate days.

On a daily basis, scheduling involves providing and arranging time for the day's learning activities.

The following guidelines are important in developing plans for scheduling:

- **Cooperative planning is necessary to identify the scheduling patterns most appropriate for the community.**

  Factors affecting school scheduling in each community include the distances children are required to travel, whether they walk or are bussed to school, how major industry affects the community, and what funds are available for the educational programs. Communities in which a large segment of the population works a four-day week, for example, may prefer a four-day school week for young children. Communities in which necessary funds are available may find it desirable to keep schools open all year, or to extend the school day.

- **Schedules for individual children should be designed to meet family needs.**

  Parents and school personnel should work together to develop a schedule that takes into account such factors as the availability of family transportation or the schedules of other school-age children in the family.

- **The daily schedule of learning activities will vary from day to day and should remain flexible if children's needs are to be met.**

- **The daily schedule should provide time for certain basic activities, as indicated in the following chart:**

In the Daily Schedule

3-, 4-, 5-, 6-year olds . . .	need time for	. . . 5-, 6-, 7-, 8-year olds
Arrival	– time to receive individual attention from the staff and be helped with coats, boots, etc. if necessary – time to talk with staff and with friends – time to get help in starting an activity	
Planning	– time to become informed about the plans for the day (very young children) – time to help staff to plan their day	– time to receive guidance in planning their day – time to receive guidance in developing individual plans for projects and independent activities
Caring for their own needs	– time to use the bathroom – time to use the drinking fountain – time for snacks – time to take off or put on coats, boots, sweaters, etc. – time to rest when tired	

In the Daily Schedule

3-, 4-, 5-, 6-year olds . . .	need time for	. . . 5-, 6-, 7-, 8-year olds
Indoor activities	– learning experiences related to various content and skill development areas (see chart, page 29); large blocks of time to pursue interest areas and needs: painting, reading, house corner, blocks, work bench, water table, puzzles, games, science table, live animals	
Outdoor activities	– Large blocks of time to use playground equipment (climbing apparatus, tree stumps, inner tubes, tricycles, wagons, bikes, skates, etc.); take walks; plant gardens; play with sand and water; engage in games appropriate to their age	
Quiet	– time to enjoy books (look at books, read to themselves, have stories read to them) – time to listen to music (records, tapes, visiting musicians) – time to see slides, filmstrips, movies – time to play quiet games – time to rest on individual mats, towels, beds if necessary – time for conversation with friends – time to enjoy being alone	
Meals as determined by length of school day and community needs – in the classroom	– time for family-style meals – time to wash hands before meals – time to cleanup after meals	– in the cafeteria
Trips and visits by resource persons	– time to walk or ride to places of interest – short periods of time to listen to interesting adults and older children (policemen, artists, farmers, boy scouts, 4-H'ers)	
Cleanup	– time to put away materials and toys with the help of adults	

In the Daily Schedule

3-, 4-, 5-, 6-year olds . . .	need time for	. . . 5-, 6-, 7-, 8-year olds
Evaluation	– time to discuss the day's learning with guidance of adults (share a painting, relate school and home experiences) – time to discuss any concerns (playground problems, meal time, etc.) – time to plan for tomorrow	

G. Evaluation

The purpose of evaluation is to determine whether or not what is expected to happen has happened or is happening. Like a map, evaluation can keep the destination visible while pointing out the present location.

In an early childhood education program, the children, the staff, parents, and the community are continuously evaluating in one way or another. Children test themselves: "Can I climb the ladder?" Parents evaluate children's progress by observing new skills: "Can he write his name now?" Staff members ask, "Are the children really learning what I had hoped and planned they would learn?" And communities ask, "Are we getting our money's worth from this program?"

Finding answers to these questions is essential in evaluating early childhood education programs at all levels. The following guidelines indicate ways in which effective evaluation may be accomplished.

■ **Evaluation at any level should include the following steps:**

– Formulating program goals and objectives;

– Gathering information to describe the participants who are to take part in the program or activity;

– Examining the objectives in light of the participants' special needs; clarifying or redefining objectives as needed;

– Developing appropriate procedures and techniques to determine the results of the program or activity;

– Applying those procedures and techniques to determine the success of the program or activity in achieving goals or objectives.

■ **Useful procedures and techniques for evaluating the progress of children in early childhood education programs or activities include the following:**

– OBSERVING

Good teachers are trained observers. They know that daily observation over a long span of time ensures a total picture of the entire child: his strengths, weaknesses, abilities, successes, learning styles, and feelings about himself and others.

A child grows in many ways. By observing his physical condition, teachers and other staff members can tell if a child's vision and hearing are satisfactory, if he seems adequately nourished, if his muscle control is developing, so that his body is ready for what he is asked to do. Observation can help the staff decide when to refer a child for health services.

A child's feelings about himself and others are revealed by his behavior. By watching him, a teacher knows when he feels threatened, when he seems confident and eager, and, as his behavior dictates, when his environment should be changed. Changes in scheduling, grouping, materials, and equipment can result from observation.

As a child gains knowledge, he shows it in everything he does. As soon as he can write his name, he writes it everywhere. When he learns to tell time, he does it. This is the kind of progress a teacher can see. By observing carefully, the teacher not only sees what the child has learned but also gains some insight into how that learning came about.

— RECORDING

Recording information helps the staff to know where each child is, how he got there, and what plans are needed for the individual and the group. There are many useful ways to record what children do and how they grow. Staff members keep some records while the children can plan and carry out other records themselves.

Checklists: Checklists are a quick way of noting what a child has done. They show at a glance such things as: what skills have been learned, how motor development is progressing, what books have been read, what projects have been attempted, and which were finished. Checklists can be kept by the staff or the child.

Anecdotal records: Anecdotal records are a way of keeping track of what a child says, how he acts or reacts, how he learns, and important events in his life. These are usually short narratives and they help the staff see an overall picture of the child.

Health records: Records about a child's health include information about: asthma, hearing loss, allergies, heart problems, immunization.

Portfolios: A child may be encouraged to keep in a portfolio examples of what he considers his best work. These can include drawings, paintings, short stories, poems, examples of daily work, art projects, notes on science experiments, graphs, and songs. In another portfolio, a teacher may keep selected examples of a child's work to show his progress.

— TESTING

Tests can be useful in conjunction with other evaluative techniques for assessing children's growth and for identifying their needs. There is a wide range of tests available to test the young child's readiness, achievement, I.Q., aptitudes, attitudes, and feelings; but not all of these tests are appropriate for all early childhood education programs. Tests must be carefully selected in terms of program goals. If they are designed to measure children's progress in achieving a goal that has been identified for the particular program involved, they can provide useful information. If they measure progress toward goals that the early childhood education program is not designed or intended to achieve, they will be of little value.

In using tests to determine the progress or developmental level of an individual child, it is important to interpret the results in the context of other evidence of growth derived from observations, records, and conferences.

— CONFERRING

Conferences can provide valuable information and insights concerning children's growth. Observation by a single observer — a teacher, the child himself, a parent — can give some perspective on the child's development, but shared observations broaden and deepen that perspective.

Conferences between children and a teacher or other staff members provide opportunities for the child to learn more about himself and for the staff member to learn more about him.

Conferences between staff members and parents can yield insights and information that only a parent can provide concerning how the child sees himself or what learnings he reveals outside the school setting. At the same time, it gives parents additional information about the child's performance outside the home.

Staff conferences between teachers and paraprofessionals or health personnel enable the entire staff to broaden their understanding of the child and of his needs.

■ **Evaluation of the early childhood education program should focus not only on the progress of children, but also on the effectiveness of every aspect of the program.**

Decisions are being made continuously at many levels about many aspects of the program. Communities determine which services are needed; staff members make decisions about materials and equipment and teaching methods and grouping patterns; parents and staff members establish criteria for staff selection; inservice training programs are developed; the school day is organized around half-day or full-day sessions. Each of these decisions should be carefully scrutinized in light of the specific goals it was intended to achieve so that future planning may be predicated on sound principles.

V

V.
Procedures for Initiating or Modifying an Early Childhood Education Program

All public schools in Maryland have early childhood education programs which are planned for children, ages six through eight. As of September 1973, the early childhood education program in each school system will include children, ages five through eight. However, on occasion, needs arise within a school system to develop a completely new part of the program such as a prekindergarten program. At other times innovative modification becomes necessary, such as the change to a nongraded organization of the early childhood education program. When marked changes are deemed important, the following guidelines provide a framework for change.

The need for an early childhood education program or for the modification of an existing program may be identified by parents, community groups or agencies, or school staff members.

In counties where local Community Coordinated Child Care Councils (4-C Councils) have been established, the local superintendent and his counterpart in social services and health agencies should work with the 4-C Council to initiate or substantially modify early childhood education programs. These interagency, interdisciplinary 4-C Councils, one-third of whose membership is parents, can be utilized for fact-finding, planning, and coordination.

In counties where superintendents wish to initiate or modify a program and there is no local 4-C Council, the following procedure is recommended:

- **The local superintendent of schools, or someone specifically designated by him after consultation with his counterparts in social services and health agencies, should establish a council that includes broad-based representation:**
  - The Maryland 4-C Committee
  - Local school systems and boards of education, public and nonpublic institutions
  - Parent groups
  - Local community agencies, health, social services, law enforcement, sanitation, and other government agencies; community action agencies; colleges, hospitals; mental health centers; medical schools
  - Local businesses

— Local religious groups

— Community organizations: YMCA, YWCA, NAACP, various civic organizations

— Members from the community-at-large

■ **This council should analyze program needs and resources.** This includes:

— Identifying community needs and resources in terms of:

Location — urban, suburban, rural, changing community, metropolitan;

Population — racial, ethnic, socio-economic and religious backgrounds, age groups;

Existing programs — recreational programs, day care programs, Head Start programs, nonpublic day care programs, nurseries, health centers, drug abuse centers;

Housing patterns — apartments, one-family homes, multi-family homes; luxury housing, low-cost housing, sub-standard housing;

— Identifying the children who are to be served by the program: ages, numbers;

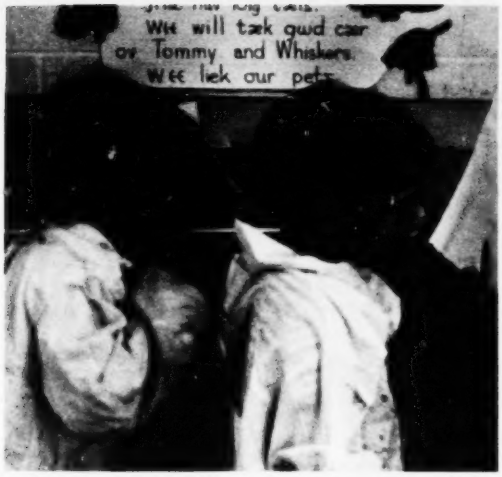
— Identifying the basic needs of the children to be served: health and social service needs, educational needs;

— Identifying facilities that can house the program: space in public schools, churches, synogagues, recreation centers, industrial buildings, hospitals, public buildings;

— Identifying means of financing aspects of the program not funded through current education, health, or social service budget: local taxes, State funds, federal funds; special grants; fees to be paid by parents based on a sliding scale; endowments; other means of fund raising;

— Defining criteria and procedures for recruiting, selecting, and orienting professional, paraprofessional, and volunteer staff.

■ **The council shall present its findings and recommendations to the local superintendent of schools and the local board of education, which is responsible for approving the program and, if approved, to the professional staff which is responsible for planning, developing, implementing, or evaluating the program.**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Wee liek our pets

VI

VI.
Recommendations

To ensure the effective dissemination and use of these guiedlines, it is recommended that:

- Guidelines be presented to local school systems in ways that provide opportunity for discussion and planning;
- Representatives of the multi-agency committee responsible for developing the guidelines be involved in the initial presentation of the guidelines;
- Provisions be made for local school systems to work cooperatively with colleges and the Maryland State Department of Education in developing specific plans for implementing the guidelines;
- Provisions be made in local staff development programs and in college early childhood education programs for developing staff competencies in implementing the guidelines;
- Guidelines be reviewed every five years by the Maryland Early Childhood Education Committee and revised as needed.

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